

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The present claims were amended to recite in each claim that the fiber is a bicomponent fiber and that the bicomponent fiber comprises a polymer mixture which forms at least a part of the fiber surface and that at least one of the polymers in the mixture is a polyolefin continuous phase. Support for the addition of the recitation that the fiber is a bicomponent fiber is supported throughout the specification including original claim 1. Support for the recitation that the mixture comprises a polyolefin continuous phase is found, for example, at page 7 line 28 of the original specification. Claim 5 was cancelled as the substance of this claim was incorporated into the independent claim. Additionally claim 14 was amended to provide additional clarity, as the claim may have been misconstrued to mean that the matrix polymer was required to be in the sheath and the core. Accordingly, no new matter has been added, and the entry of these amendments is therefore courteously solicited.

Claims 1, 3, 5, and 9 stand rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated, or in the alternative under 35 USC 103 (a) as obvious over US 5,108,827 to Gessner. Initially, it is important to point out that Gessner does not relate to bicomponent fibers. As explained at page 4 of the Applicants specification "bicomponent" fibers are those containing two polymer regions having different chemical and/or physical properties formed through the combination of two or more streams into a single spinneret. Gessner on the other hand, speaks of biconstituent fibers. As explained at column 1, lines 60-64 of Gessner, Gessner's biconstituent fibers are made by melt spinning blends of two or more immiscible polymers. Gessner's fibers are produced using a single stream of a material having a continuous phase and a discontinuous phase uniformly distributed throughout. A cross section of Gessner's fiber, such as shown in figure 1 of Gessner, is uniform. That is not to say that it is homogeneous, as there are clearly dispersed particles, but these particles are uniformly dispersed as the fiber was made using a single extruder to the spinneret.

A bicomponent fiber on the other hand, will not be uniform. For example in a sheath/core form, it is readily understood by those in the art that the core will look different from the sheath. In the present claims the applicants require a mixture of material for the portion of the bicomponent fiber which makes up at least a portion of

the fiber's surface. This mixture might look similar to the cross-section shown in figure 1 of Gessner, but the present claims require at least a third feature, such as a core in a sheath/core form of a bicomponent fiber.

As explained in the present specification, the recitation of a bicomponent fiber is significant as it allows combinations of properties such as hand feel and spinnability, that have not been previously observed.

Gessner can also be distinguished with regards to present claim 12, which recites that the matrix polymer has a melting point which is at least 10°C less than the dispersed phase. Gessner, on the other hand, at column 1, line 64 teaches that its continuous phase is "substantially higher in melting point than the discontinuous phase", which is completely opposite of claim 12's recitation.

Accordingly, as Gessner neither teaches a bicomponent fiber, nor makes such a bicomponent fiber obvious, it is respectfully requested that these rejections be withdrawn.

Claims 1-9 and 14-15 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as obvious over US 5,654,097 to Choe et al. As amended, the claims all recite that the bicomponent fiber comprise a mixture where at least one of the components is a polyolefin continuous phase. Choe, on the other hand relates to polyesters, polyamides, or poly(styrene-elastomer-styrene) materials. These materials would not be expected to have the same hand-feel characteristics touted in the present specification, and in fact, these materials are taught to be useful for tire cord, in which strength and abrasion resistance are key parameters and hand feel is unimportant. Hence the fibers of Choe do not relate to the same art as the present claims. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejections based on Choe be withdrawn.

Claims 6-7, 10-13 and 16-19 are rejected under 35 USC 103 (a) as obvious over Gessner. The Examiner has applied Gessner in the same manner as before, but as stated above, as Gessner does not disclose bicomponent fibers, nor make them obvious, this reference is insufficient to support the Examiner's rejection. The Examiner has added, however, the statement that, "Gessner teaches fibers comprising PE dispersed in a PP phase. This teaching would have provided motivation to the skilled artisan for multiconstituent fibers comprising a core of propylene polymer" (see page 5 of the Office Action). Applicants are unsure why having a continuous

phase of polypropylene in a homofilament fiber would make obvious a core of polypropylene in a bicomponent fiber. Perhaps this is related to the assumed misunderstanding as to the distinction between a bicomponent and a biconstituent fiber as discussed above. At any rate, if this rejection is maintained, Applicants request further guidance as to why the Examiner believes that a person of ordinary skill in the art would modify Gessner so as to make a bicomponent fiber with a polypropylene core.

Based upon the above amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that present claims of record are patentable over the art of record, and therefore courteously request that the rejections be withdrawn and the case passed to allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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